

**City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
March 16, 2015 – 3:30 P.M.
City Commission Chambers – City Hall
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301**

Special Meeting MEMBERS	PRESENT/ABSENT
Wendy Gonsher, Chair	P
Benjamin Bean	P
Mark Fillers	P
Wanda Francis	P
Nicholas Gattozi	P
Gwendolyn Haynes	A
Jason King	A
Chris Lovell	P
Richard Morris	P
Fred Roccanti	A
Jasmin Shirley	P
Noah Szugajew	P
Joseph S. Van de Bogart	P

Staff Present

Mario DeSantis, Liaison and Housing Administrator
Jonathan Brown, Housing and Community Development Manager
Emilie Smith, Budget Manager
Lisa Edmondson, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to City Commission

None.

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- **Quorum Requirement – As of March 12, 2015, there are 13 appointed members to the Board, which means 7 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Gonsher called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

The Staff members present introduced themselves at this time.

III. HOPWA DISCUSSION

Mr. DeSantis recalled that the Board had asked him to compile a list of the fiscal year (FY) 2014-15 expenditures within the Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program categories. This list reflects total allocations, expenditures, subsidy payments, and administrative/operations costs for the four months of the program within this fiscal year. With the exception of the project-based voucher program, all programs are spending at a rate of approximately 31%, or close to one-fourth of the total dollar amount. The project-based program is spending at a rate of roughly 29%, which Mr. DeSantis advised may be due to ongoing transition.

Mr. Brown emphasized that the Board is asked to review spending within HOPWA categories rather than spending by specific agencies. Chair Gonsler added that the agencies' representatives present at the special meeting would be asked to explain what the HOPWA spending cuts would mean to them in terms of services provided rather than what they may mean to individual agencies. At this time representatives of the agencies were asked to address the Board.

Lois Westerhoff, representing Shadowood, observed that the largest cut in the proposed budget would occur in the facility-based voucher program. She noted that the current focus on rapid re-housing of homeless persons may not be helpful for all clients, as intensive case management is often necessary to address addiction, mental health, and other issues affecting homeless individuals. Ms. Westerhoff pointed out that participants in facility-based programs are housed, fed, and receive life skills training and medical case management. Participants in these programs are less likely to fail when they obtain permanent housing.

Sharon Edmonson, representing Care Resource, explained that she is a client of the agency. She briefly described the services provided to her by Care Resource, which resulted in her achieving stable housing.

Tiffany Arieagus, representing SunServe and Care Resource, advised that both programs provide housing case management and assist clients in navigating through the services available to them. These programs also ensure that clients are linked to necessary services, including addiction and mental health care, family reunification, domestic intervention, and veterans' programs. She concluded that since October 1, 2014, 711 unduplicated clients have been served by housing case managers.

Steve Nolte, representing Broward House, advised that this agency currently serves 38 clients through facility-based housing. He noted that most individuals in the program are not yet ready to live independently and require additional services, such as treatment for substance abuse or mental health issues. He concluded that an earlier reduction in funding resulted in six clients per day not receiving services.

Patrice Paldino, representing Legal Aid of Broward County, stated that there is a demonstrated need for legal services within the HOPWA community. She explained that

these services are similar to case management in providing non-housing support so stabilized clients may continue on paths to self-sufficiency.

Diego Rodriguez, representing Care Resource, advised that the agency assists individuals with enrollment in programs that help them find individual housing solutions. He has assisted individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities. The agency's goal is social cohesion, justice, and empowerment for residents of Broward County confronting challenges.

Francisco Gomez, representing Care Resource, emphasized the importance of case management services provided by SunServe and Care Resource. Mr. DeSantis clarified that when clients need legal services, they must first go through case management, which assesses their vulnerability and self-sufficiency. If HOPWA can pay for legal services resulting from a specific issue or issues, clients are then referred to legal services to address them. The client then returns to the housing case management program for discharge or re-certification.

Ms. Paldino of Legal Aid confirmed that since October 2013, over 500 cases have been opened for 228 clients, many of whom present with more than one issue to be addressed. She expressed concern with the possibility that case managers, rather than attorneys, may accompany clients to court, as case managers are not trained to provide advice and counsel to clients in a courtroom setting.

Ms. Paldino also clarified that the cases opened since October 2013 address the following issues:

- 108 evictions
- 15 writs of possession
- 68 poor conditions issues

She noted that these cases occur in private homes as well as in homes provided through the tenant-based voucher program. Legal Aid staff is trained to help determine the underlying issues behind these cases.

Mark Ketcham, representing SunServe, advised that because HOPWA funds appear to be decreasing, clients will reach out more often to case management for supportive services. He pointed out that 100% of HOPWA clients go through case management.

Natasha Markman, representing Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), reported that the agency serves an agency of 64 clients per month or 768 clients per year. The proposed funding cuts would result in roughly 263 fewer clients being served next year. She clarified that BRHPC provides STRMU and PHP services.

Mylene Soto, representing Care Resource, stated that she is a client of this agency. She described the services provided to her family by the agency, including legal assistance and securing a home.

Sharon Bryant, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), stated that this agency provides project-based rental assistance and works with other agencies and services to help clients.

Mr. DeSantis explained that when a vacancy occurs within a given program, he sends an email to all agencies, which in turn require their clients to apply for housing. The tenant-based waiting list is available only to housing specialists or clinical supervisors within this program, while some project-based and facility-based agencies maintain their own waiting lists. He requested that representatives of the agencies offering project-based services describe how turnover is handled by these programs.

Mr. Nolte of Broward House advised that this agency has 72 rooms available in project-based housing, with an estimated turnover of eight to ten units per year as clients transition out of the program. Ms. Bryant of MODCO stated that her agency has 28 units, some of which are shared by clients. She estimated that one-bedroom units turn over every three years, while two-bedroom units, which often house families, turn over within two to three years.

Mr. DeSantis advised that STRMU and PHP programs do not assign dollar amounts to clients, but include a bulk sum for a client's emergency need or first/last month's rent. Because it is difficult to know how much money would be distributed from these programs each year, they are assigned a lower dollar amount by Staff's recommendation; if more monies are necessary, it may be possible to backfill these programs from other sources.

With project-based housing, however, there is a commitment to a specific number of units, rents, and utilities, which will fluctuate only slightly, as they are based on the client's income. Mr. DeSantis emphasized that project- and tenant-based programs have clients attached to the units for which the program must pay. If a client moves from the tenant-based voucher program, his or her place in the program is not backfilled. There are currently 272 clients served by this program, with an average loss of 20 clients each year. Mr. DeSantis advised that this is where the first budget cut would occur, while other budget cuts would be redistributed.

He continued that the recommended allocation for administration and operations is based on current staffing levels and client ratios, which will be specifically listed in the upcoming HOPWA RFP. The STRMU and PHP cuts also had low recommended allocations, as it is possible to move dollars from other sources into these programs, as funds are not tied to individual clients. Mr. DeSantis concluded that this would provide an expenditure of \$4,787,406 to STRMU, PHP, and tenant-based vouchers, leaving a balance of \$1,703,335 for the remaining programs.

The Board discussed the Staff recommendations, with Mr. DeSantis clarifying that although the allocation for the tenant-based voucher program is likely to decrease the

following year, it is not possible to estimate the amount of this decrease. He added that if the issue was not a dollar amount but a specific type of services to provide to clients, these dollars would be moved to PHP or STRMU, which meets emergency needs, or case management. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), however, is moving away from transitional housing and toward rapid re-housing, which provides housing as the top priority.

Mr. Fillers observed that as clients move off the tenant-based voucher program, the reduction in spending for this program is reduced more quickly. Mr. DeSantis confirmed that losing an average of 20 clients each year from this program is equivalent to an estimated dollar amount of \$250,000. He also noted that the RFP cautions provider agencies that while this loss is anticipated, they may also expect a 5%-10% budget cut over each of the next several years. The RFP is a one-year contract, with the option to renew for two consecutive one-year terms.

Chair Gonsler commented that programs such as STRMU and PHP seem more likely to help the greatest number of clients than continuing to fund the same existing clients in the tenant-based voucher program. For this reason, she felt STRMU, PHP, and case management funds should not be subject to additional funding cuts. Mr. DeSantis advised that one change within the RFP will be a new HUD requirement for clients to work. He added that once the final dollar amounts are assessed in June 2015, he may have a clearer picture of where the tenant-based voucher program is at present, and may be able to move some funds from this program to another.

Mr. Fillers requested clarification of what would happen to various programs as funding continues to be reduced in the future. Mr. Brown advised that the City Commission may ultimately be asked to decide how reduced funding will be used within the categories, or possibly whether or not entire HOPWA categories may be eliminated.

Chair Gonsler asked if this meant the entitlement benefit provided to individuals enrolled in certain voucher programs would be eliminated. Mr. Brown replied that this benefit would stop at a deadline specified by HUD in the future. Mr. DeSantis added that the City currently offers multiple programs in which clients may be enrolled, which together present a continuum of care; however, many municipalities provide only certain programs, such as the tenant-based voucher program, as it is the simplest program to administer and has the lowest overhead costs.

Mr. Fillers recalled that the members had previously discussed whether or not it would be possible for the City to place a limit on the time period in which a participant remains in the tenant-based voucher program. Mr. DeSantis confirmed that an attachment provided to the Board members shows that such a time limit may be determined, although he cautioned that the City does not presently have an infrastructure that would allow it to make this change. If the Board wished to implement this time limit in the future, it would be necessary to notify agencies and clients that the City is moving toward this goal.

The members further discussed the proposed cuts to different HOPWA programs and the effect these cuts might have, including the fact that a reduction in funding for legal services could result in a client attending a hearing without appropriate legal representation, which would result in liabilities. It was also noted that clients who receive Social Security income (SSI) or Social Security disability income (SSDI) would not ultimately be able to earn enough income to be moved from the voucher programs.

Motion made by Mr. Fillers, seconded by Ms. Francis, to accept the recommended allocation by category as put forward by Staff.

Mr. DeSantis reviewed the recommended allocations, pointing out that some of the funding that has gone toward the tenant-based voucher program in the past could be used toward the acquisition of project-based housing, where monies can be recycled back into the program. He explained that this represents a different way of looking at HOPWA funding under the rapid re-housing model toward which HUD is moving.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 8-2 (Chair Gonsler and Mr. Van de Bogart dissenting).

Mr. DeSantis advised that the recommended allocations would be sent to the Procurement Department later in the week for inclusion in the RFP, which is expected to be issued by March 30, 2015. He estimated that the Board would review responses to this RFP during the first two weeks of June, with dates to be determined by April.

IV. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mr. Fillers asked if the Board could take action that would help HOPWA spend less funding on the tenant-based voucher program. Mr. DeSantis replied that once the RFP has gone out and feedback is available from both current and new HOPWA agencies, he will review the Administrative Procedures Manual for ways to determine a new housing model that makes business sense and meets the requirements of clients while also moving them away from long-term dependence on HOPWA. Mr. Brown added that the Board will need to ensure that any proposed changes are vetted by the City Commission before directing Staff to take action on these changes.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

VI. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Mr. Brown advised that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications will be reviewed at the next scheduled Board meeting, with presentations from the applicants. He noted that representatives of the Procurement Department will also be

present at the April meeting to determine dates on which the HOPWA RFP will be presented.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]